

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF ECONOMIC SUPPORT
ADMINISTRATOR'S MEMO SERIES

NOTICE 00-21

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RE: 2001 REQUIRED TRAINING
FOR INCOME
MAINTENANCE
(WISCONSIN WORKS,
FOOD STAMPS, MEDICAID)
WORKERS

To: County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Tribal Chairpersons/Human Services Facilitators
Tribal Economic Support Directors
W-2 Agency Directors

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Purpose

The Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Division of Economic Support (DES) will continue to require training for economic support specialists and Wisconsin Works (W-2) workers in county and tribal agencies. The requirements are based on operational needs as well as Administrative Rule DWD 17.

Introduction

This Administrator's Memo outlines both the initial and the ongoing training requirements for Income Maintenance (IM) workers. According to DWD 17, income maintenance worker has the meaning given in S.49.33 (1)(c), Stats. As defined, an IM worker is "a person employed by a county, a governing body of a federally recognized American Indian tribe or a Wisconsin Works agency whose duties include determinations or redeterminations of income maintenance program eligibility." "Income Maintenance " or "IM" means Wisconsin Works, food stamps or Medicaid. (DWD 17.02 [11]) This memo describes both new and experienced worker training for Income Maintenance workers. The training requirements stated in this Administrator's memo reflect those for calendar year 2001 (January 1 through December 31, 2001).

It is important to make the distinction between new and experienced workers. The following definitions are taken from DWD 17.02 and should be used by IM agencies to make decisions regarding staff training requirements.

- “Experienced IM worker” means an IM worker employed by a county or tribal agency, or W-2 agency before the effective date of this subsection November 1, 1999, or an IM worker who has completed initial income maintenance training.
- “New IM worker” means a person who is employed by a county or tribal agency, or W-2 agency as an IM worker on or after the effective date of this subsection November 1, 1999), including a permanent employee who transfers into an IM worker position and who has not completed initial income maintenance training.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STATE

DES/BFS Training Section

The Division’s Training Section is responsible for coordinating all training related to IM programs (Food Stamps, W-2, and Medicaid). The goal of training is to support local agencies as they administer these programs. This support will include the development and delivery of quality training services. Training events will be planned, managed, provided and coordinated by the DES Training Section.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF INCOME MAINTENANCE AGENCIES

Income Maintenance (Economic Support /Wisconsin Works (W-2)) Agency Training Liaisons (ATL)

Each county, W-2 or tribal agency must designate an Agency Training Liaison (ATL), as a point of contact for training issues. The Area Administrator is to be provided with the name of the ATL and changes in personnel need to be reported to the AA. The ATL does not need to be a full-time trainer position. The ATL is to work with the Training Section on training activities and issues

Local agencies will be responsible for the general development of their employees and for training not offered by the Department. It is the county, W-2 or tribal agency’s responsibility to ensure that their staff has the skills needed to perform job functions. County, W-2 or tribal agencies are responsible for:

- ensuring that all income maintenance and related staff complete the prescribed Department training;
- ensuring that new and experienced IM workers are trained in a timely manner on all IM and W-2 and Related Programs policy, procedure and automated system updates that are issued by the Department;
- ensuring that subcontracted staff are adequately trained, including notification of all relevant training opportunities;
- ensuring that the agency supplements Department training to specifically meet the needs of the agency and their workers, including training on local processes;

- maintaining records of staff training such as types of training attended and the dates attended (the DES/BFS Training Section will maintain files of DES sponsored training);
- establishing an ongoing method of assessing its training needs and completing a training needs assessment; and,
- ensuring their staff is computer literate in personal computers and word-processing software. The Department recommends working with local technical colleges and private providers as appropriate to meet these training needs.

NEW INCOME MAINTENANCE WORKERS

All workers employed by an Income Maintenance agency must complete the New Worker training program. The Income Maintenance agency shall ensure that each new IM worker completes the Department's initial training during the first 6 months of employment (DWD 17.03[1]). It is the Department's intent to supply sufficient opportunities for this learning to occur. Completion of the New Worker program requires involvement, and participation in all appropriate instructional activities. The modules contain the knowledge and skill areas needed to assist workers in successfully understanding the administration of Food Stamp, Medicaid, W-2, and other related programs. The topics have been identified and incorporated to help the administrative agencies meet performance and quality assurance standards. The Income Maintenance agency shall develop evaluation strategies to ensure that the new IM worker achieves a minimum standard of competence (DWD 17.03[2]).

An Income Maintenance agency that chooses not to participate in the Department sponsored new worker training shall develop a plan to implement the standardized new worker curriculum developed by the Department. The implementation plan shall be submitted to the DES Training Section for approval at least 45 days before the planned starting date of training, when it is first offered, and annually after that. One of the key criteria for approving an agency's request to administer the standardized curriculum is the availability of an employee dedicated to full-time staff training responsibilities. Specifics of the plan are described in DWD 17.04(2). Contact your Regional Training Manager with questions regarding what to include in the required implementation plan.

EXPERIENCED INCOME MAINTENANCE WORKERS

Following are the CY2001 training requirements for experienced IM workers:

Professional Development Requirement

A minimum of twelve hours of professional development is an annual requirement of all experienced IM workers and supervisors within the W-2, Food Stamp and Medicaid programs. Professional development includes, but is not limited to: DES Enhanced Case Management programs, conferences, technical college courses, seminars, workshops, and/or policy and procedure refresher training. This professional development training does not need to be conducted by Department staff. The county, W-2 agency or tribal agency will select the appropriate professional development training for each of their workers and maintain records to document that this requirement has been met. Agencies will have full discretion as to what training fulfills this requirement for each employee, but training records, as described, must be maintained to document completion.

Enhanced Case Management Training

Enhanced Case Management programs develop the ability of supervisors and workers to provide quality services to all of their customers, including customers with special needs. Twelve hours of Enhanced Case Management activities are required for all experienced workers for calendar year 2001, Enhanced Case Management topics are interpersonal skills, special needs, programmatic, and supervisory skills training programs. These topics will be offered in one or two day classroom programs, or through alternate methods. Classroom programs will be offered on a regional basis. The topics are divided into four subcategories:

- Programmatic - These courses focus on developing knowledge and skills which will enhance interaction with customers, improve caseload management and promote strategies for meeting program requirements.
- Special needs - These courses assist staff in understanding behavioral, physical and situational challenges which may require accommodation, outside intervention or special strategies in working with a customer.
- Interpersonal skills - These courses assist staff in developing skills and strategies for effective communication, teamwork, customer service and personal growth and development.
- Supervisory - These courses are designed for current supervisors and those preparing for supervisory roles. They will help supervisors and lead workers to work effectively with staff to meet program and agency goals through practical applications and sharing of best practices.

Enhanced Case Management Topics are identified as such on the training announcements.

The following requirements apply for new workers:

If a worker completes the New Worker training program during the first half of the calendar year, six hours of professional development activity and six hours of Enhanced Case Management are required.

If a worker completes the New Worker training program during the second half of the calendar year, there are no professional development or Enhanced Case management requirements for that calendar year.

ALL INCOME MAINTENANCE WORKERS

New Policy and Refresher Training

As new policy is developed and implemented, affected workers must attend the appropriate training sessions. Refresher training will be identified as required training based upon Department decisions and standards. Training announcements will identify the required programs.

Waivers and Training Equivalencies

The DES Training Section will accept reasonable, justified proposals to waive individual training program requirements, or approve training equivalencies. If an IM agency desires a waiver, they must submit a waiver request outlining the reasons for the request to the appropriate Area Administrator. The proposal must include documentation, such as training course outlines, course materials, curriculum guides, and/or documentation of equivalent experience. If the waiver is related to substituting another training program or experience for a DES requirement, the proposal must detail how that curriculum/experience accomplished the objectives of the DES program. Waivers will be reviewed on a case by case basis. The DES/BFS Training Section will communicate a decision no later than 30 days from the date of receipt of the request. Waiver requests must be submitted at least 45 days before the first day of the planned training.

Training Records

Each IM agency is required to keep records of all training attended by each worker. The records must be maintained in an automated system that can sort by both training participant and training program information. At a minimum, the categories of information collected should include the training program, date of program, number of hours attended, trainer, sponsoring organization, and location of training.

The DES/BFS Training Section will work with the Area Administrators to conduct periodic site visits to monitor training records. The regional offices' monitoring activities will include attention to training requirements and the maintenance of training records.

The DES/BFS Training Section will also maintain training records for workers who attend DES sponsored programs.

SUMMARY OF TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

The following is an outline of requirements for both new and experienced IM workers:

New Workers

1. New Worker training program
2. Professional development training (6 hours maximum)
3. Enhanced Case Management series (6 hours maximum)

Experienced Workers

1. New Policy and refresher training specific to job functions and duties
2. Enhanced Case Management series (12 hours)
3. Professional development training (12 hours)

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